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MINUTES

OF THE

AUBURN CONVENTION,

HELD AUGUST 17, 1837,

TO DELIBERATE UPON THE

DOINGS OF THE LAST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

IN RELATION TO THE SYNODS OF

WESTERN RESERVE, UTICA, GENEVA AND GENESEE

AND THE

THIRD PRESBYTERY OF PHILADELPHIA.

AUBURN:
PUBLISHED BY THE CONVENTION.
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1837.

MINUTES, &c.

AUBURN, N. Y., AUGUST 17, 1837.

IN pursuance of a call for a Convention, commissioners, both lay and clerical, met in the First Presbyterian Church, at 9 o'clock. The meeting was organized by the appointment of Rev. JAMES RICHARDS, D. D., of Auburn, as chairman; and Rev. TRYON EDWARDS, of Rochester, and E. W. CHESTER, Esq., of Cincinnati, as temporary clerks.—Reading the Scriptures (80th and 46th Psalms), by Rev. WILLIAM PATTON, D. D., of New-York.—Singing.—Prayer, by Rev. THOMAS MCAULEY, D. D., of New-York.

Commissions were then presented from the different Presbyteries, when it appeared that the following persons had been duly commissioned.

PRESBYTERIES.	MINISTERS.	LAYMEN.
	SYNOD OF UTICA.	
St. Lawrence,	Fred. E. Cannon.*	
Watertown,	James R. Boyd	Horace Hunt.
	Roswell Pettibone.	
Oswego,	Robert W. Condit	John E. Dutton.
	Ralph Robinson	
	Samuel Sweezy.	
Oneida,	Joseph Myers	Benj. P. Johnson
	H. H. Kellogg	Thomas Williams
	Moses Gillett	Ami Doubleday.
	Moses C. Searl	
	Horace P. Bogue	
	Edward Allen	
	Joseph Penney, D. D.	
Otsego,	Calvin Waterbury	David H. Little.
	A. P. Allen.	
	SYNOD OF GENEVA.	
Geneva,	Philip C. Hay	Henry Wells
	Thomas Lounsbury	Abraham B. Hall
	Miles P. Squier	William D. Cook.
	William L. Strong	
	Flavel S. Gaylord	
	George R. H. Shumway	
	Maltby Gelston.	
Chenango,	John B. Hoyt.*	
Onondaga,	Hutchins Taylor	Pliny Dickinson
	J. W. Adams	Elijah Rhodes
	William C. Cooper	Philip Flint.
	John Gridley.	
Cayuga,	James Richards, D. D.	Salem Town
	Levi Parsons	Hiram F. Mather

PRESBYTERIES.	MINISTERS.	LAYMEN.
	SYNOD OF GENEVA—*continued.*	
	Seth Smith	Abner Hollister
	Josiah Hopkins	Samuel Rhoades
	John Clark	
	Washington Thatcher.	
Tioga,	Charles White	Eleazar Dana
	Marcus Ford	Elias Hawley.
	William J. Bradford	
	Luther Clark	
	William Clark	
	John A. Nash	
	Moses Jewell.	
Cortland,	Edward A. Beach	Horatio Ballard
	Dennis Platt.	Simon R. Bradford.
Bath,	James H. Hotchkin	Elam Bridges
	B. Foster Pratt.	Daniel S. Benton.
Delaware,	Daniel Waterbury	
	William Clark.	
	SYNOD OF GENESEE.	
Genesee,	Abel Calwell	Samuel Warner.
	Ezra Scovel	
	Solomon Stevens.	
Ontario,	Robert W. Hills	George Hastings,
	Elam H. Walker.	Reuben Sleeper.
Rochester,	Conway P. Wing	Charles Church
	Tryon Edwards	Milton Sheldon
	J. B. Richardson	Leonard Adams
	William Mack	Frederick Starr
	Elijah D. Wells.	Orlando Hastings
		Ashley Samson.
Niagara,	E. R. Beadle	Seth Parsons
	Jonathan P. Hovey	John Boynton.
	John Thalimer.	
Buffalo,	John C. Lord	A. Bryant.
	David D. Gregory	
	Obadiah C. Beardsley	
	Isaac Oaks	
	Stephen Peet.	
Angelica,	Moses Hunter	Russel Barnes
	Samuel W. May	Thompson Bell
	Leverett Hull.	Jonas G. Prentiss.
Chemung,	John Frost	John C. Hays
	George Spalding.	Simeon Benjamin.
	SYNOD OF WESTERN RESERVE.	
Grand River,	Dexter Witter.	
Portage,	William Hanford	Daniel Upson
	Giles Doolittle.	Elisha Beach.
Huron,	Alvan Nash.	John Seymour.
Trumbull,	Josiah Town	
	Selden Hays.	
Cleveland,	John Keep	Stephen Whitaker.
	Samuel C. Aikin	
	Myron Tracy.	
Lorain,	Daniel W. Lathrop.	Henry Brown.

PRESBYTERIES.	MINISTERS.	LAYMEN.
	SYNOD OF NEW-JERSEY.	
Newark,	Gideon N. Judd	John A. Payne
	Ebenezer Cheever	Obadiah Woodruff
	Ebenezer Seymour	Israel Crane.
	John Ford,	
	Asa Hillyer, D. D.	
	Ansel J. Eddy.	
Montrose,	Adam Miller.	William Jessup.
	SYNOD OF PHILADELPHIA.	
3d of Philadelphia,	Albert Barnes	Frederick Scofield
	Eliakim Phelps	Ambrose White.
	John L. Grant.	
Wilmington,	E. W. Gilbert	Willard Hall
	N. Patterson.	Johnson Clark.
	SYNOD OF ALBANY.	
Columbia,	Jonathan Cone.	Francis Sayre.
Champlain,	Charles Doolittle.*	
Troy,	Alvah Day.*	
	SYNOD OF CINCINNATI.	
	Lyman Beecher*	E. W. Chester.
	George Beecher.	
	SYNOD OF NEW-YORK.	
New-York,	Samuel H. Cox.*	
2d of New-York,	Thomas McAuley, D. D.*	
3d of New-York,	William Patton, D. D.	Richard T. Haines
	Absalom Peters, D. D.	John L. Mason
	Edwin F. Hatfield	Marcus Wilbur.
	Isaac Lewis	
	N. E. Johnson.	
North River,	Milton Butolph*	
	Joseph D. Wickam.*	
Illinois,	Theron Baldwin.*	
Alton,	Frederick W. Graves.*	
St. Louis,	William C. Wisner.*	
Athens,	William W. Backus.*	
Ohio,	Luther Halsey, D. D.*	
Maumee,		Lyman Beebe.
West Hanover,	Hugh Carlisle.	

The following persons from those Presbyteries represented by regular delegates, were invited to take seats as corresponding members :—

Rev. Joseph K. Ware, Presbytery of Geneva.
" Henry Snyder, " Ontario.
" Charles Goodrich, " Chemung.
" George E. Delevan, " Bath.
" John C. Morgan, " "
" Benjamin C. Smith, " Cayuga.
" William Goodell, " "
" John W. Fowler, " Oneida.
" Stephen Porter, " Geneva.
" Henry Dwight, " "

* Those members did not appear by the appointment of their Presbyteries, but were made members in full by a resolution of the Convention.

The two Calls for Conventions at Rochester and Auburn were then read, and also the Notice requesting that the former might yield to the latter.

On motion of Rev. Mr. Squier, *Resolved*, That the Convention be now organized by those whose commissions have been received.

On motion of Mr. Hastings, a committee was appointed to report the names of additional members. Rev. Messrs. Smith, Aiken, White, and Lord were appointed.

On motion of Rev. Dr. Patton, a committee of five was appointed to recommend officers and report rules for the Convention. Drs. Patton and Beecher, and Messrs. Gilbert, Jessup, and Upson were appointed.

The committee reported, recommending officers as follows:—

Rev. James Richards, D. D., of Auburn, *President.*

Rev. James H. Hotchkin, of Campbell, N. Y.,
Rev. Joseph Penney, D. D., of Clinton, N. Y.,
Hon. Henry Brown, of Brownhelm, Ohio,
Hon. B. F. Johnson, of Rome, N. Y.,
} *Vice Presidents.*

Rev. Tryon Edwards, of Rochester,
E. W. Chester, Esq., of Cincinnati,
} *Secretaries.*

They also recommended that the rules of the house be the same as the general rules of our judicatories, except the 17th and 18th, referring to the "previous question." The Reports were accepted and adopted.

On motion of Rev. Dr. Beecher, a business committee of fifteen was appointed, consisting of Drs. Penney and Patton, and Messrs. Lord, Condit, Towne, Gilbert, White, Hopkins, A. D. Eddy, C. Samson, Haines, Jessup, Allen, D. W. Lathrop, and Smith.

Recess until 2 o'clock, P. M.

Met at 2 o'clock.

Committee on reporting names, &c., recommended the following resolution:

Resolved, That any Presbyterian minister or elder who may be present, in connexion with Presbyteries not represented by commission, be invited to sit and vote in the Convention. Report accepted and adopted.

Committee on business reported in favor of reading certain letters and documents. Their report was accepted and adopted; and letters, &c. were read 1. from Presbytery of Newark; 2. Rev. Daniel Dana, D. D., Mass.; 3. Presbytery of Portage, O.; 4. Church of Westchester, Pa.; 5. Thos. Cleland, D.D., Ky.; 6. A Meeting of Laymen in Pittsburg, Pa.; 7. Presbytery of Columbia; 8. Presbytery of Lorrain, O.; 9. Rev. Dr. Carroll, Va.

On motion of Mr. Ford, the acts of the General Assembly purporting to exscind the Synods of the Western Reserve, and also of Utica, Geneva, and Genesee, and also the act declaring the dissolution of the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia, were read before the Convention.

Committee on business reported several resolutions, which being amended were adopted, and are as follows:—

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to draw up a statement of facts in relation to the formation and character of the churches within the bounds of the

Synods declared to be exscinded. Messrs. Peet, Parsons, Hotchkin, Bogue, Hanford, and D. W. Lathrop were appointed the committee.

Resolved, That in the judgment of this Convention, the acts of the last General Assembly declaring the Synods of Western Reserve, Utica, Geneva, and Genesee, not to be constituent parts of the Presbyterian Church, on the ground that their connexion was dependent on the plan of union of 1801, and upon charges vague and unsupported, were unconstitutional; and therefore in the opinion of this Convention, null and void.

Under this resolution, the Convention heard the legal opinions of Hon. George Wood of New-York, and Hon. Samuel M. Hopkins of Geneva.

On motion of Mr. Ford, a committee was appointed to draft the reasons on which the Convention pass this resolution. Messrs. Jessup, Beecher, and Judd were appointed. The letters, documents, and legal opinions which had been read were referred to this committee.

The committee after an interval reported. Report accepted, and after discussion and amendment, adopted. [See Report No. I.]

On motion of Mr. Squier, *Resolved*, That all Presbyterian ministers and elders present, who are not commissioned, by reporting their names to the Secretaries, be authorized to sit in the Convention as corresponding members.

Recess until half-past 7 o'clock.

Met at half-past 7 o'clock.

On motion of Dr. Cox, *Resolved*, That instead of a *recess* at the hour for dining, the Convention adjourn and meet with prayer.

Committee on business reported the following resolutions. Their report was accepted, and the resolutions, after discussion and amendment, were adopted.

Resolved, That the action of all the judicatories ought to be directed to the preservation of the *union and integrity of the Presbyterian Church*, on the principles of good faith, brotherly kindness, and the constitution.

Resolved, In accordance with these principles, that it be recommended to the Synods declared to be exscinded, with their Presbyteries and Churches, to retain their present organization and connexion without seeking any other, and that the Presbyteries send their commissioners to the next General Assembly as usual.

On motion of Dr. Patton, solemn thanks were offered to almighty God for the *entire unanimity* with which this resolution was adopted.

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to correspond, and confer on the general state of the church, and to take measures to secure the ends proposed by this Convention, as expressed in the foregoing resolutions.

Messrs. Phelps, Penney, and Lounsbury were appointed by the President to nominate the committee. After an interval, they reported, recommending that the committee consist of Rev. Dr. Richards, Rev. Dr. Halsey, Rev. P. C. Hay, Rev. Seth Smith, Rev. Levi Parsons, Rev. Josiah Hopkins, Rev. L. E. Lathrop, Rev. Henry Dwight, Hiram F. Mather, Esq., D. W. Forman, Esq., Pliny Dickinson, Esq. Their report was accepted and adopted.

The Convention adjourned with prayer by Rev. Dr. Penney, to meet at 9 o'clock to-morrow morning.

August 18, 1837.

Convention met, according to adjournment, and was opened with prayer by Rev. Dr. Richards.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved.

Committee on business reported the following resolution. Report accepted, and resolution adopted.

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to draft a Letter to the churches of our connexion, exhibiting the views and feelings of this Convention in relation to the unhappy circumstances in which a portion of the Presbyterian Church is placed, and the course which they regard it their duty now to pursue. Dr. Beecher and Messrs. Smith and Aiken were appointed. After an interval, the committee reported; their report was accepted, and after amendment adopted. [See Report No. II.]

The same committee also reported the following resolution: their report was accepted, and the resolution adopted.

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to draw up an expression of the opinion of this Convention, touching the *rights* of members of the Presbyterian Church, as ministers and private members; the manner in which these rights are guaranteed and guarded; and in which they may become impaired, forfeited, or taken away. Drs. Cox, Beecher, and McAuley, and Messrs. Hastings and Wells were appointed. The committee after an interval reported; their report was accepted, and after discussion, amendment, &c., was adopted. [See Report No. III.]

The same committee further reported several resolutions; their report was accepted, and the resolutions referred to a committee consisting of Dr. Halsey, and Messrs. Judd and Frost.

The Convention adjourned with prayer by Rev. Mr. Hotchkin, to meet at 2 o'clock, P. M.

Convention met at 2 o'clock, P. M., according to adjournment, and was opened with prayer by Rev. Dr. Richards.

Afternoon was taken up in discussion, &c.

Recess until 7 o'clock.

Convention met at 7 o'clock.

Evening occupied with discussion, &c.

Adjourned, with prayer by Rev. Dr. Beecher, to meet at 9 o'clock to-morrow morning.

August 19, 1837.

Convention met, according to adjournment, and was opened with prayer by Rev. Mr. Aiken.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved.

The committee on business reported in part. Report accepted and laid on the table.

On motion of Mr. Aiken, *Resolved*, That a delegation from this body be appointed to attend the Convention to be held at Ann-Arbor, Michigan, on the last Thursday in August, and lay before them the doings of this Convention. Rev. Messrs. Aiken and Peet were duly appointed.

The committee on business reported the following resolution:—

Resolved, That in view of the present state of the Presbyterian Church, it is highly desirable that all the Presbyteries connected with the General Assembly should be fully represented at its next meeting in Philadelphia. Report accepted, and resolution adopted.

On motion of Dr. Beecher, Messrs. Hay, Little, and Wells were appointed a committee to raise whatever funds may be required to meet the expenses of correspondence, and the publication of the doings of this Convention.

On motion of Dr. Peters, Rev. Dr. Richards and Rev. Mr. Hopkins were added to this committee.

On motion of Mr. Lathrop, a committee was appointed to present a minute on the subject of a day of fasting and prayer. Messrs. L. E. Lathrop, Squier, and Ford were appointed. Their report, which was accepted and adopted, was as follows:—

Resolved, That in view of the present divided state of the Presbyterian Church, and the low state of religion in our country, this Convention would recommend to the churches here represented, and all other churches who shall be pleased to unite with them, to observe Wednesday, the 25th of October next, as a day of united fasting, humiliation, and prayer.

Adjourned, with prayer by Rev. Dr. Cox, to meet at 2 o'clock, P. M.

Convention met at 2 o'clock, according to adjournment, and was opened with prayer by Rev. Mr. Hotchkin.

Mr. Hastings, from the Presbytery of Rochester, and Rev. Mr. Hay, from Geneva Presbytery, requested leave of absence, which was granted.

Rev. Dr. Halsey, from the select committee, made a report, which was accepted, and after discussion was recommitted to the same committee, with the additions of Rev. Drs. Penney and Peters, and Rev. Mr. Aiken. Their report, as afterward made, was accepted and adopted. [See Report No. IV.]

Convention adjourned, to meet on Monday, at 9 o'clock, A. M. Concluded with prayer by Rev. Dr. Hillyer.

MONDAY, AUG. 21, 1837.

THE Convention met, according to adjournment, and was opened with prayer by Rev. Mr. Judd.

The committee on "the formation and character of the churches, &c.," reported. Their report was accepted, and referred to the standing committee of correspondence and conference. Most of the morning was occupied with the statements of

the abovementioned committee, and the inquiries suggested by their report, with the replies thereto. [One most important fact was shown by the committee, viz. *that within the entire bounds of the Synods of Utica, Geneva, and Genesee, there is but one single church that came into connexion with the Presbyterian Church in accordance with the Plan of Union of* 1801!—See Report No. V.]

The Convention adjourned until 2 o'clock, with prayer by Rev. Mr. Squier.

2 o'clock.—Convention met, according to adjournment, and was opened with prayer by Rev. Mr. Hopkins.

One or two reports, noticed in their proper connexion, were presented, accepted, and adopted.

On motion of Dr. Patton, it was *Resolved*, That the minutes of the Convention be signed by its officers, and published under the care of the committee of correspondence, &c.

On motion of Mr. Squier, *Resolved*, That the thanks of this Convention be tendered (through the committee of correspondence, &c.) to the families of this village for their hospitality and kindness to the members of this body, during its session.

On motion *Resolved*, That the proceedings of this Convention be published in the N. Y. Observer, the N. Y. Evangelist, the Philadelphia Observer, the S. R. Telegraph, the Cincinnati Journal, and such other papers as the committee of correspondence, &c. may think proper.

It was requested that it might be noticed in the minutes *that every Resolution of the Convention was passed with entire unanimity.*

Convention adjourned, *sine die*, with singing (the 133d Psalm), prayer and the apostolic benediction by the Rev. Dr. Richards.

(Signed, &c.)

JAMES RICHARDS, *President.*

JAMES H. HOTCHKIN,
JOSEPH PENNEY,
HENRY BROWN,
B. P. JOHNSON,
} *Vice Presidents.*

TRYON EDWARDS,
E. W. CHESTER,
} *Secretaries.*

REPORTS.

NO. I.

Resolved, That in the judgment of this Convention, the acts of the last General Assembly declaring the Synods of Western Reserve, Utica, Geneva, and Genesee, not to be constituent parts of the Presbyterian Church, on the ground that their connexion was dependent on the plan of union of 1801, and upon charges vague and unsupported, were unconstitutional; and therefore in the opinion of this Convention, null and void.

In support of the foregoing Resolution, the Convention assign briefly the following reasons:—

The Presbyterian Church have a constitution or covenant, written out, adopted and sanctioned, and which forms the bond of union between the several parts thereof, and under which the government of the church is administered by the several judicatories. It may with propriety be styled a confederation of churches united together for their mutual benefit, and the preservation and protection of their mutual as well as individual rights.

Each member on entering the church, entered into a solemn covenant with the whole church, and the church, by receiving according to the prescribed forms, entered into covenant with the individual member. The terms of this mutual covenant are defined and set forth in the constitution, and the following are some of the particulars:—

The member acquired equal rights with every other member, and received a solemn guarantee of protection in the enjoyment of those rights, so long as he remained a member; and a full assurance that his rights should not be taken away until he forfeited them; and that such forfeiture should be ascertained by the regularly constituted tribunals, upon full opportunity of being heard by himself, and upon due proof made against him.

The highest punishment is exclusion from the privileges and membership of the church; and against the direct or indirect infliction of this, except upon hearing and trial, the constitution of the church protects every member.

The act complained of has, without hearing and without trial, without *charges even*, deprived a vast number of Presbyterian members of all connexion with that church, and declares them "neither in form nor in fact" members thereof.

The constitution has made ample provisions for the redress of all grievances which it was supposed would arise in the church; and especially for the correction of any error in doctrine or irregularity

in practice, whether existing in the individual members or in the bodies organized under the constitution. The mode of doing this is fully and clearly defined in that instrument. An attempt, then, to correct an alleged error or irregularity in any other mode than that pointed out by the constitution or compact into which all had entered, is *Usurpation;* if it produce oppression, it is Tyranny; in its character, and tendency it is and must inevitably be subversive of all good and righteous government and order; and may properly be classed with those acts of lawless violence recently so disgracefully frequent in our country, and whose justification is attempted alone upon the plea of "*the necessity of the case,*" or the still more unrighteous plea that "*the end justifies the means.*"

The truth or falsity of the charges alleged cannot alter the character of the unlawful attempt to remove them.

The offence of hanging a man without trial loses none of its criminality, nor is it the less murder, because the executioners assert and believe, at the time of perpetrating the offence, that the man deserved to die.

In a Government of Laws, *no necessity* can ever exist for trampling those laws in the dust, and disregarding their requirements. If such acts be done, they are either rebellion or revolution, or both.

The act, then, of the last General Assembly, which, overstepping all the forms of law, thus declared all the *individuals* in the four Synods no longer members of the Presbyterian Church, was unconstitutional, and is void.

But it is alleged that this act only affected ecclesiastical relations, and that *individuals* were not thereby deprived of any rights; and the Assembly attempted to justify this position by a declaratory resolution. But the fallacy of this, is apparent from the consideration that no individual member could be dismissed from one of those churches, and claim his right to be received as a member of the Presbyterian Church by one of the churches remaining in connexion with the Assembly, nor could a call be given by one of the churches in such connexion to a minister belonging to one of those Synods.

The act deprived ministers of their rights solemnly guaranteed by the constitution.

The venerable President of this Convention could not, without a new examination, a new profession of his faith, and a new reception, be admitted even to membership in one of the churches still connected with the Assembly, if the act of the last Assembly be valid.

But the dissolution of the ecclesiastical connexion is as clearly an outrage upon constitutional rights, and as clearly a breach of covenant, as if considered in relation to individuals.

This, it is believed, is clearly shown by the following considerations:

1st, The Presbyteries composing these Synods were constituted in the manner pointed out by the constitution, and each had been duly recognized and acknowledged by *all* the other Presbyteries as form-

ing an integral portion of the Presbyterian Church. They were in fact, as well as in right, parts of that church.

2d, They came in, not by force, or in consequence of any act of the General Assembly, or of any Conventional arrangement, but under the regular operation of the constitution—some by the acts of the respective Synods, and some by the General Assembly itself. The Synods are entrusted with this power, and no complaint was ever made to the General Assembly that it was improperly executed in the formation of the Presbyteries now declared not to be a part of the Presbyterian Church. The Synods which, out of their own members, formed and organized a number of these Presbyteries, by their commissioners in the late General Assembly have united with others in now declaring those Presbyteries not a part of the church. This was the case in the Synod of Albany in part, and unanimously in the Synod of Pittsburg.

3d, Some of the Presbyteries thus disowned, were constituent parts of the church, and acted in the formation of some of the Synods, whose commissioners have now assumed the right of declaring that those from whom they derive their own authority had no power to confer it.

4th, The Assembly had no constitutional authority, *expressly given*, to declare a portion of their regularly ordained ministers and elders, and regularly constituted churches and presbyteries, no longer a part of the church. The right to exercise a power of such immense magnitude, with or without notice to the parties to be affected, could never, by any proper rules of construction, be an "implied power." If it were now a question of conferring such express power by the adoption of an amendment to the constitution, it would, it is believed, find very few, if any, advocates among the tens of thousands of members of the Presbyterian Church.

5th, But the constitution, in the case of errors and irregularities in churches, presbyteries, and synods, has pointed out and clearly defined *the mode* in which they shall be corrected; and that the majority in the last Assembly well understood these provisions, is apparent by their resolutions for citing inferior judicatories to answer for the alleged offences, and directing that the charges should be preferred and their time to answer those charges be fixed.

It is also farther apparent, by their subsequently enjoining upon certain Synods an attention to the same subjects.

6th, It is an apparent perversion of terms to justify this act on the ground of exercising Discipline. The act does not purport to be *Discipline*, nor is it pretended to be in conformity with any rule of discipline provided for the government of the Presbyterian Church. That the rule of our Saviour of "doing to others as we would that others should do to us" is entirely prostrated, is equally apparent.

7th, Not one of all the Presbyteries was, or could be, organized under the provisions of the Plan of Union of 1801; nor could that

plan, or the abrogation of it, in any way affect the ecclesiastical relations and standing of any minister, or elder, or Presbyterian church.* The only effects of the plan of 1801 were connected with those who embraced it,—and if some embracing it were under its terms found connected with presbyteries, it would no more be a justification of the measure of exscinding the whole presbytery, than, in the days of burning heretics, a whole church consisting of many members, or a whole family, should suffer at the stake, because one of its members was condemned for heresy. The principle of condemning the innocent, because in any of the relations of life, or in associations civil or religious, they are united with the guilty, has never before found advocates. And yet it is the direct and designed operation of the act complained of; and they make no discrimination between those who have come regularly into the church, who have worn themselves out in labor for its advancement, and those who are alleged to have been irregularly introduced.

Yet the principle is long since established, that "no person can take advantage of his own wrong," and that when rights have become vested under powers supposed to be given to a body, that body, by a different construction given by themselves *to their own* powers, cannot take away or destroy those rights. The abrogation, then, of the Plan of Union by the General Assembly, upon a new construction of their own powers, could not affect the standing, relations, rights, and privileges of the churches previously already organized under it. However the operation of that plan may be suspended *in future* by the act of abrogation, the results of its past action cannot be annihilated.

But supposing the Assembly to be right in declaring the Plan of Union unconstitutional, yet the gross injustice of applying that conclusion to support their exscinding act will be most manifest from the following considerations:—The General Assembly formed the Plan of Union; they constituted presbyteries through the operation of their system, which, by the very act of organization, gave them certain very important rights. The Assembly require them to receive the churches organized under the Plan of Union, and to admit their committee men to seats in their bodies; and when those presbyteries have yielded filial obedience to the commands of their mother, that

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* In addition to this consideration, the whole of the territory embracing the three Synods of New-York came into connection with the Presbyterian Church, so far as they were congregationalists, not under the Plan of Union of 1801, but under a plan of union and correspondence *made* in 1807 between the Synod of Albany on the one part, and the Northern Associated Presbytery and the Middle Association on the other, which plan was subsequently submitted to the General Assembly, and by them considered, sanctioned, and adopted in 1808, and has never been objected to or abrogated, and is of binding force and effect, as well upon the General Assembly as upon the churches which have come into their connection under it.

very obedience is made the reason and occasion of cutting them off from all their maternal connexions, and of infliction upon them of the highest punishment known in the laws of the church.

NO. II.

CIRCULAR LETTER from the Convention of Presbyterian Ministers and Delegates convened at Auburn, New-York, Aug. 1837, to the Judicatories, Ministers, and Members of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

BRETHREN, BELOVED IN THE LORD,—

You will perceive, from the published minutes of this Convention, that we have come *unanimously* to the conclusion that the integrity of our church is not to be despaired of, and that the apprehended evils of division on the one hand, and the hope of deliverance on the other, together with our solemn vows to seek her prosperity, demand our united endeavors to restore her peace and perpetuate her unity. This result has been obtained after much deliberation and prayer, and the consideration of many documents and letters from different and distant sections of the church, indicative of a very extensive and increasing disapprobation of those acts of the late General Assembly, of which we complain as unjust and oppressive.

The object of this letter is to solicit your co-operation with us in our proposed endeavors. For this purpose, we affectionately entreat your personal influence, as well as your associated action, to secure, for the next General Assembly, a full representation of ministers and elders from the Presbyteries to which you belong, that the voice of the whole church may be heard in that body. It may be proper, also, for us to suggest the importance of your sending men of wisdom, moderation, and firmness, whose object shall be, as they may be guided by wisdom from above, to arrest the tide of evil which has broken in upon us, and open again the streams which make glad the city of our God.

It is our full belief that the reasons urged by the majority of the last General Assembly, as the ground of their proceedings, are wholly insufficient to justify the decisions of which we complain; that they acted without due information, and under the influence of strong excitement produced by great and very injurious misapprehensions. It has, indeed, been solemnly proclaimed by the late Assembly, in their "*Circular Letter to all the Churches of Jesus Christ*," that we promulge or tolerate errors which "form in fact another gospel," and which are "unscriptural, radical, and highly dangerous;" and that repeated but unavailing efforts have been made to purge them out. But the records of the Assembly will show, that, in all the trials for heresy, no acquittals have been had in that body for the last five years,

in which numbers of the most influential of those who now thus accuse us did not concur, not excepting the reputed author of the circular which contains the above charges. We observe also, that these apprehensions of our heresy were a natural result of long-continued private accusations and correspondence, and of open denunciations in public journals, and of ex parte testimony and rumors in the Philadelphia Convention and Assembly. Presuming to act upon such statements, without the constitutional precautions for ascertaining their truth by regular process, the Assembly have assumed grounds of action, in respect to three of the disowned Synods, which had no existence; and have justified their unconstitutional course by principles as much at war with the elements of society as the conduct they were advanced to justify. The facts falsely assumed were, that the Synods of Utica, Geneva, and Genesee were constituted in accordance with the Plan of Union of 1801. But the document we publish discloses the fact, that the Presbyteries belonging to these Synods were *not* organized on the plan of 1801, but in connexion with a plan differing from this, and proposed by the Synod of Albany to an association of ministers and churches in 1807, which having been sanctioned by the General Assembly, was accepted by the association referred to, and fully adopted by the Synod of Albany in 1808. The abrogation, therefore, of the Plan of Union of 1801 has not destroyed the Plan of Union of 1808, or vacated the relations or rights constituted by it. *That* plan remains unrepealed and in full force to this day; and all the Presbyteries existing in accordance with it, are as truly members of the Presbyterian Church as any in her communion.

Even if the Synod of the Western Reserve, and the three other Synods, had been connected with the Assembly through the plan of 1801, still the reason assumed for the excision of those Synods, (viz. that relations constituted and rights vested by unconstitutional action are void from the beginning,) is one that would shake the very foundations of society, and is contrary to the most enlightened judicial decisions of the civilized world.

But further: the reason alleged for vacating such rights in the present case, (viz. because "the plan in question goes to the subversion of the Presbyterian Church," and is therefore immoral and cannot be obligatory,) does certainly too much resemble, if it be not identical with, the Papal casuistry, that no contracts, promises, or agreements can be valid against the well-being of the church; and that any contract or engagement whatever, though solemnly made by her own authority, if it be found injurious to her interests, is to be regarded as null and void from its very beginning. Now, it is certain that individuals and nations have no such self-dispensing power from their own engagements; and we had supposed that no Protestant church would lay claim either to the right or benefit of such a dispensation.

The arguments for the constitutionality of the summary process of excision, without charge, citation, or legal evidence, are alike *extra-*

ordinary. It was, it is said in the Circular to the Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, "the most eligible course," "the only practicable course;" "a personal process would have been impossible, and if possible, tedious, agitating, and troublesome in the highest degree." The plain sense of the passage seems to be, that the excision of these Synods could not have taken place *constitutionally* at all, and therefore we took the "most eligible" and only "practicable course" to march *over* the constitution. It would be tedious and troublesome, if it were possible, to regard the prescribed order of our discipline, and therefore "the more maturely we reflect, the more firmly we are persuaded that we have taken the most eligible course," to dispense with rules of discipline, and march directly to our work.

But the climax of extravagance is found in the claim that "*plenary power*" is possessed by the Assembly to travel over the constitution, and dispense with the rules of law and evidence, for the preservation of doctrine and the prosperity of the church. If the plenary power to decide in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline, to reprove, warn, and bear testimony against error in doctrine or immorality in practice, in any church, presbytery, or synod, and to suppress schismatical contentions and disputations, means the power to do this by constitutional inquiry, and the *regular* operation of law and evidence, it is nothing to the purpose to justify the recent doings of the Assembly. It can be pertinently adduced, therefore, in justification, only by the assumption that the Assembly has original jurisdiction in all the aforesaid premises, and may proceed to do these things *without* charges, or citation, or evidence under oath, or the presence of the parties with opportunity for defence. But the possession and exercise of such powers would constitute a perfect despotism.

Equally extraordinary and unjustifiable were the decisions of the late Assembly in relation to the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia. That a Presbytery originated by the General Assembly on complaint, subsequently dissolved by a Synod, and again on complaint restored by the General Assembly, and in 1836, by act of the Assembly, included within geographical limits, should have been cut off without charges, citation, or trial, (Assembly's Minutes, pp. 472–3,) is not to be wondered at as a consummation of the violent action which preceded it. In our opinion, it is one of those unconstitutional acts, which cannot, any more than the banishment of four Synods, be acquiesced in by the church, without the destruction of her constitution and dismemberment of her union.

After all, it is painful to perceive the indications of consciousness on the part of the majority that their doings were unconstitutional and revolutionary. One of the most influential members of the late Assembly admitted, that the course was not constitutional, and (without rebuke) justified it on the ground of necessity! Accordingly the defence, in the circular, of the course pursued, does not place it on constitutional ground, but on the *necessity* of the case.

"We could no longer walk together in peace;" "personal process in each case would have been impossible, and if possible, tedious, agitating, and troublesome in the highest degree." Now, it is well known that in civil society there are cases in which justice cannot be reached by legal forms, and it cannot be denied that personal process at law is often "tedious, agitating, and troublesome in the highest degree." But we had supposed, that, were individuals on these accounts to right themselves by force, regardless of law, it might affect their moral character, and expose them to consequences equally "tedious, agitating, and troublesome." It is generally admitted, also, that were nations or courts of justice to adopt such maxims for the preservation of civil liberty, it would tear up the foundations of society, and let in the full tide of revolution and anarchy. It is precisely this necessity which, in despotic governments, is the tyrant's plea for violence and blood,—in revolutions, the end which sanctifies the means,—and in mobs, the summary justice which in special cases, for the public good, dispenses with constitutions and laws.

The very act itself of cutting off the Synod of the Western Reserve, concedes that the synod was a constituent member of the Presbyterian Church. "By the abrogation of the Plan of Union, the Synod of the Western Reserve is declared to be NO LONGER a part of the Presbyterian Church." It was then, it seems, considered by themselves to have been a part of the Presbyterian Church, down to the time of the act of abrogation, but *no longer*. And being cut off without constitutional accusation, citation, legal evidence or trial, it was severed plainly by the hand of revolutionary violence—and that because any other method, as it is said, would have been "too tedious, agitating, and troublesome." The citation of synods might indeed have abbreviated the labor of a personal citation, and was thought of and proposed; but the prospect of a certain majority of the churches on the other side, the next year, rendered that course "impossible," and left "none more eligible" than to cast them off while they could, and as they might; and (as a distinguished member of the Assembly said on the occasion) "throw them out and they will fall into such disorder and confusion that they never can get back again." First, they accumulate alarming rumors, and talk of citing synods which they insist never belonged to them, and then, partly on account of such rumors, and partly because they never belonged to them, they cut them off from membership. At one time, judicial forms were not required, because it was only an act of legislation—then, at another, it was their duty "judicially to condemn such errors while in their power." Now, in opposition to these manifold claims, of the necessity of separation by violence, or even peaceably, we declare our conscientious and solemn belief, that no necessity for a dismemberment or division of the Church exists. That there may be some leaning in our Church to Antinomian and Arminian error, need not be denied; but these alleged tendencies do not appertain to the

general body of the Church, on either side; they characterize only small numbers of individuals in opposite extremes; and nothing but the restoration of confidence is required to secure the action which is needed to restrain and correct these dawning tendencies to hurtful error.

But the division of the Church will only increase the relative power of all ultra-agitators, and proportionably diminish the power of either body to restrain them. All these alarms, therefore, of dangerous error, as a justification of the late violent action of the Assembly, have, in respect to the great body with whom we are classed, no foundation. The errors ascribed to us we do not hold; and the truths which we are regarded as giving up, we do cleave to with as high an estimation, and as intense an affection, as our brethren. They are our comfort in prosperity, our support in sorrow, and the foundation of our glorious hope of life and immortality in a future state. They are also the weapons of our warfare—mighty through God, and burnished by constant use.

We have not failed to observe that we are charged in the Circular with holding fundamental error—a system "which is another gospel," while at the same time we subscribe without scruple the confession of faith. This we believe is the first time in which hundreds of protestant ministers have been before the whole Church of God, and officially charged with heresy and hypocrisy, and that, by brethren of their own communion, without a constitutional accusation, citation, or trial. We doubt not that both the Church and the world, instructed by the language and the conduct of our brethren in the Convention and the Assembly, will regard these violent and irregular accusations as mournful evidence of the power of excited feeling to impel good men to say and do things which, under the returning empire of an unruffled mind, they would themselves disapprove. And we fully believe that the time is near, when those brethren who have brought such grievous accusations against us, will look back upon their conduct with grief and wonder.

We are satisfied with the confession of faith as understood and practically interpreted from the time of the "adopting act;" and only demand that the faith of treaties be maintained, and that the well settled import of our subscription be not exchanged for one which our Church never adopted, but purposely avoided—which some, who have recently been added to our communion, seem determined to introduce—but which no church can endure, without continual conflict, and division, and sub-division, destructive to the harmonious and comprehensive action demanded for the rapid evangelization of the world.

The differences of language, or theories, or doctrine, which now characterise the two great divisions of our Church, are such only as have characterised her communion from the era of her pacification,

and such as by every form of recognition, have been declared to be consistent with a sincere and honorable confession of her faith.

In respect to irregularities and disorders in the Church, the implications of the following paragraph are as lamentable in their uncharitableness, as they are undeserved in their application.

"One of the most formidable evils of the present crisis is the widespread and ever-restless spirit of *radicalism*, manifest both in the Church and in the State. Its leading principle every where seems to be, to level all order to the dust. Mighty only in the power to destroy, it has driven its deep agitations through the bosom of our beloved Church. Amidst the multiplied and revolting forms in which it has appeared, it is always animated by one principle. It is ever the same leveling, revolutionary spirit, and tends to the same ruinous results. It has, in succession, driven to extreme fanaticism the great cause of revivals of religion, of temperance, and of the rights of man. It has aimed to transmute our pure faith into destructive heresy, our scriptural order into confusion and misrule. It has crowded many of our churches with ignorant zealots and unholy members; driven our pastors from their flocks; and with strange fire consumed the heritage of the Lord, filling our churches with confusion, and our judicatories with conflict; making our venerated name and beloved institutions, so far as its fearful influence extends, a hissing and a by-word before the American people; and even threatening the dissolution of our national union, as well as the dismemberment of the Presbyterian Church."

That charges should be made by our brethren, against one-half of the Presbyterian Church, of "radicalism," "levelling all order in the dust," and "driving its deep agitations through the bosom of our beloved church," amid the paroxysms of their own violent action, and while her foundations were heaving, her walls tottering, her pillars falling, her dust and fragments flying, and guardian angels lifting their wings to depart, is a mournful curiosity of superlative wonderment in respect to the possible aberrations of excited mind.

That an epidemic radicalism has swept over the land is true; but the impression that it has swept exclusively or chiefly over one division of the church, or that it has been successfully resisted in one part and tolerated in the other, can be the result only of great misinformation. The evils of this description which have afflicted some of the churches within the bounds of the exscinded Synods, appeared, for the most part, in such forms as would have rendered the effort to repress them by immediate coercive discipline the sure means of their propagation and of the division of the churches. They were not, however, tolerated, but prayerfully resisted from the pulpit and the press, and in Presbyteries by arguments, resolutions and expostulations; and the result of this was the formation in our churches of a correct public sentiment, before which these ephemeral epidemics

have passed and are passing away, as no coercive discipline could have driven them. These Synods, therefore, have been exiled from the church as delinquents, while in fact they have been occupied in a discreet and successful performance of their duty, in circumstances of great delicacy and difficulty.

It has been confidently asserted and extensively believed, that there is a plan on the part of the new school to revolutionize the doctrines, discipline, and ancient order of the Presbyterian Church. That none of us have entertained such a design, we solemnly declare; and if it has been entertained by any one, it has never come to our knowledge, and we believe the accusation to be utterly unfounded. Equally without foundation is the apprehension that we are unwilling that our brethren should administer and guard their evangelical charities, by ecclesiastical organization, provided the same liberty of conscience and preference be acceded to us in respect to voluntary associations; and it was the evidence long accumulating of a design now consummated to array the patronage, the influence, and the authority of the whole church for the support of ecclesiastical, and the exclusion of voluntary organization, which has occasioned the resistance complained of. It was made in defence of rights which we shall never surrender. But in a representation of the whole church, by such men as the exigencies of her danger may convene, we cannot doubt that the rights of conscience and preference of the two great divisions of the church may be amicably adjusted. Nor do we believe it to be true that wounds have been inflicted which cannot be healed, or alienations created which cannot be reconciled. For though we have been tried by each other's language, our temptations and sins have not, we trust, vacated our confidence in each other's Christian character, or created the ranklings of a personal hostility, or obliterated the remembrance of those years of prosperity through which some of us have travelled from early life to grey hairs and the verge of heaven. And we cannot be willing that a revolutionary revulsion of the church, so late in time, and so near the church's glorious day, should go down in such dark imagery upon the page of her history. We entreat, therefore, the Judicatories of the Church to send to the next Assembly those who will reverse the revolutionary action begun, and by the favor of heaven once more pacificate the church. But should our efforts to restore the harmonious action of our church be unavailing, it will be a melancholy pleasure worth preserving, to reflect that we have done what we could. Moreover, if the church must divide, it is still important that our common Christianity and our institutions of civil liberty should be rescued from the peril and the disgrace of a *violent* division, and that under auspices different from those that ruled the hour of her calamity, she may be peaceably and amicably divided.

NO. III.

THE Committee appointed to draft a *Declaration of the Rights of Presbyterians*, beg leave to report.

The same reason, in many cases, which makes the idea of *duty* so grand and so obligatory, invests also that of *right* with an equal moral magnificence. Duties and rights are correlates of each other; and he who should lightly esteem, or carelessly forego, either, would evince a mental or a moral imbecility towards both, that could ill comport with the symmetry of things as divinely constituted in the moral world. Our rights are in form three-fold; namely, original, constitutional, and reserved: but we now regard, mainly, *our constitutional rights as Presbyterians*, without forgetting or disparaging what properly belongs to both the others. In the judicatories of our Church, each member is a public officer. He is the representative and guardian of others. Hence it becomes his federate and official duty to guard their rights, to pursue their interests, and to care that the laws which represent the commonwealth, especially those of the Constitution, be preserved inviolate. To these laws every member, and especially every officer, of the Church, is solemnly obligated; and to forego or wave them, through indolence, indifference, or timidity, were utterly criminal.

Our civil rights are ordinarily classed, in reference to their objects respectively, as three-fold; namely, those of private property, personal liberty, and personal security: or, more briefly, the rights of ownership, freedom, and protection.

Analogously we may contemplate our ecclesiastical rights, under the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church; the bright and equitable inheritance, which we desire to preserve for ourselves and bequeath to our posterity.

1. *Our rights of ownership or those of private property.* A presbyterian has the right of possessing and enjoying all his own, whatever is lawfully and constitutionally such, without molestation not only, but with perfect fulness and honor. These are among his most valuable and fundamental rights. He has a right to the ownership of character, his own in particular, and proportionally to that in general which belongs to the whole community of which he is a member. He owns the right of private judgment; of an appeal to scripture; of investigation and argument; of interpreting the Constitution; of directing the avenue, as well as the object and the amount, of his own munificence; of seeking his own edification; of performing private and social worship at regulated times; of choosing his own pastor; of concerting the best measures of usefulness; of governing his own conduct within the Constitution; of complaining of abuses, errors, and wrongs, of whatever kind; of patronizing what objects, what charities, what publications, what institutions, and what agencies, he judges best; and he has the

right and the freedom of the press, of conscience, and of speech, on all topics or themes, and on all occasions: each as well as others; according to the constitution, and with due responsibility for the abuse of privilege.

He has a proportionate right or interest in the property of the church, both personal and official; *personal*, as one of the proprietors, to all of whom collectively it was conveyed by its donors; *official*, because he has received it in trust, from others, and for others; so that, as a steward, who has assumed the charge, it is his right and his duty to see that the property of the church, is neither alienated, nor impaired, nor usurped, so as to defraud alike its donors and its proprietors. The church is not an abstraction, but a community. Its members are owners in common, and its officers responsible to the whole for the equitable discharge of all their duties.

2. He has *the rights of religious freedom or personal liberty*. By this we mean his rights to think, to speak, to publish, and to act, just as he may judge best himself, in all respects and in all degrees, as others may, in similar circumstances and relations, under the same Constitution; so that nothing partial or capricious can be admitted, nothing arrogant, or usurping, or exclusive, allowed. His religious franchises are to him of paramount value, being not slightly associated with salvation and the glory of God, as these relate to every individual. Civil liberty is valuable chiefly as it subserves religious liberty; since of all tyrannies that ever oppressed mankind, that is most odious that lords it over conscience, and supersedes the prerogatives of the only wise God. As protestants we would refresh our principled detestation of *despotism* in the Church, and guard the sacred deposit of our spiritual liberties, with an unsleeping jealousy and a devout vigilance, as ever aware of the dangers which menace its destruction.

3. *Protection* is the right of every presbyterian. Our meaning is, that we are to be defended and secured in the possession of all our rights, according to the Constitution, so as to lose them only in those ways expressly indicated in that *magna charta* of our liberties. We may lose them as the result of a fair trial, in which we become, in any case, justly convicted of offence, and equitably sentenced to a legal penalty. We may lose them too by voluntary withdrawment from our ecclesiastical connection. Besides these two ways, namely, those of judicial conviction and voluntary renunciation, we deny every other. Violence may inflict a wrong, but can never annihilate or create a right. *Our law condemns no man before it heareth him or knows what he doeth.* Usurpation may exist, and for a season exalt its trophies in the Church of God. Right is the daughter of Truth, and like its parentage immortal and divine. Every Presbyterian, the most humble or the most exalted, has all the rights of the Constitution: every judicatory, and every member of it, is bound to see those rights sacredly guarded and maintained. Every mem-

ber has a right to a trial, when impeached; to counsel, when required; to a full and open hearing; to all the specified immunities, which, in the Constitution, are provided for parties on trial; and he has the right of appeal and complaint, according to the same instrument. He has the right of petition and audience, of memorial and representation; and in fine, of ample and adequate PROTECTION in all his privileges.

We distinguish here between the Constitution, and an administration under it, in every instance, and with great decision. The former is universal, the latter particular; the one permanent, the other variable; the former is paramount and obligatory, the latter possibly neither binding, nor right, in any sense. We concede, however, or rather we maintain, that an unconstitutional act, or even a series of them, on the part of a judicatory, civil or ecclesiastical, does by no means dismember or annul the judicatory itself, or properly invalidate other acts, done by the same judicatory, in the same or other connection, and at the same or other time, which are not *per se* unconstitutional. On this principle alone can we recognise the last General Assembly of our Church, as remaining such, and not suicidally destroyed, after those acts, of which we chiefly complain, and which we solemnly censure, as unconstitutional, unwise, and as involving a pre-eminent abuse of power.

A presbyterian comes into the possession of these rights, by regular, and voluntary, and accredited, union with the church, whether personal only, or official union also. In the latter case especially, he makes a compact with the whole Church, and is the party of the second part in the transaction. In the case of a minister, for example, at his official matriculation, the whole Church is represented by her commissioners of the Presbytery; who are bound to try the candidate fully, according to the Constitution, previously to admission; and to vote their solemn assent and approval in the first instance. After this, the vows of the candidate are exacted. He is duly initiated. He is received as a minister, not of that presbytery alone, but of the whole Presbyterian Church, by virtue of his office as one of her ordained ministry. Henceforth, his talents, his attainments, his graces, his hours, his services, and his devotement, and equally his character, his pure fame, his comfort, his honor, his usefulness, and his prosperity, are the sacred treasure of the Church. His rights are as real as his duties; though, too often, the latter are magnified to every thing, and the former discredited to nothing. His rights are his own, unforfeited, and unimpeachable, so long as he violates not the rights of others; according to the great maxim of all law, *Sic utere tuis ut non aliena laedas.* He stands invincible on the granite basis of the Constitution. His privileges and his responsibilities, his duties and his rights, are there alike erected and defined, recognised and inviolable.

Nor ought he to be prejudiced in his rights, if, through any mal-

administration, real or alleged, by the party of the first part, he may have been admitted, without all fault of his, either initial or progressive, in a way of informality or error, which was their fault alone. *Culpam qui meruit ferat.* Let the party suffer the damage or the censure, who did the evil. The other party was *more sinned against than sinning*, and cannot be held responsible for the wrong diplomacy, or process, of the commissioners of the Church, duly instituted, and acting officially on her behalf.

The compact ecclesiastical, indeed, involves relations to God and conscience, of supreme solemnity. But these refer to the tribunal of God and conscience alone for judgment. The church cannot at all reduce them, distinctively, to her jurisdiction. It is out of her power, and distant from her province. It is the ecclesiastical compact, as such and exclusively, which exists between the church and every one of her members and officers respectively, that may properly be the theme and the sphere, at once of her cognizance and his responsibility. All other things involved are private, personal, and remitted wholly to the judgment of God.

The affiliated party, moreover, has a right to the confidence and respect of the whole church; as well as to the charitable presumption, construction, and allowance of all his brethren. The right hand of fellowship is given him by order of the constitution. It means something more than form, and is no idle or perfidious ceremony. It is performed in the solemn presence of God, in the name of the Great Head of the church, and connected with acts of immediate worship to the Searcher of hearts. It is done virtually by the whole church; it pledges the whole church, as well as the recipient party; and it warrants expectations which ought never to be dishonored. That party can never be gratuitously discredited, suspected, or impeached, without wounding more the body that is wounded in its members. He is never to be presumed a hypocrite, a heretic, or an enemy. The church is one, however numerous its branches; and the credentials of each of its members are constitutionally good, when they regularly proceed from one of its own judicatories, "as authentic vouchers of the facts which they declare" to recommend him, according to their tenor and averment, "in any ecclesiastical judicatory, and to every part of the church." All this is his right, his perfect right; to be alleged and exacted, not compromised or surrendered, should he be questioned or doubted in relation to it, on any occasion or place within the jurisdiction of our ecclesiastical community. He may expect it from Christian candor, courtesy, and good breeding not only, but also, and much more, from the piety, the justice, and the responsibility of his brethren. Can it be questioned that this is his due, and their duty, according to the oracles of God, the constitution of the church, and every allied sentiment of virtue, probity, and honor? How far these rights of individuals, cardinal and absolute as they are, have been cha-

racteristically recognised or habitually honored, in our church, it is not the object of this document either to affirm or inquire.

That vested rights under the Plan of Union of 1801, are sacred and inviolable, and especially to be observed towards the churches and individuals who are the immediate or ultimate parties to the compact, is a proposition either self-evident or easily demonstrable. We know of nothing in our constitution that forbids such an arrangement, nothing that proves it necessarily void or unconstitutional. Some things indeed may be extra-constitutional, that are not anti-constitutional. If any thing is the latter, it is of course null and void. If the former only, it may be valid and valuable, especially if it seems to subserve the great interests of the church, and to favor the progress of the kingdom of heaven. The Plan of Union might be deemed extra, but not anti, we think; in reference to the full powers of the constitution, the high prerogatives of the supreme judicatory of our church, and the reserved rights of all her members. The long sanction of thirty-six years has consecrated too the validity of the compact. An almost immemorial usage and acquiescence has committed the original confederated parties, by whom the constitution itself was framed and adopted, to guarantee the validity of that important pact. The faith of treaties demands it. The honor of the church and the interests of religion demand it. It is sustained by the spirit, the precedents, and the well-known analogies of civil government, especially of that under whose protection it is our privilege as American republicans to live. It will be sustained, we doubt not, by the public sentiment of the nation, or at least of the whole church in these United States. At all events, if this compact were either wrong or inexpedient, the wrong was our own, and we ought not to reap advantage from our own error, but rather repent, and seek reparation in an equitable and honorable way. In that case, it were better for the compact to remain inviolate, than be changed in a manner, and with a sudden and summary legislation, that can be advocated on no principles of righteousness, or sobriety, or benignity, becoming the hallowed fame of Christians. Besides, we judge it not a light matter, that the present constitution of our church was adopted TWENTY YEARS AFTER the compact aforesaid; that our exscinded and dissolved portions were, *de facto*, original and equal parties to the constitution itself; and we hence infer that they cannot now be dismembered and disfranchised, in a way unknown and hostile to the whole provisions of that constitution, more than could the brethren themselves who performed that incomparable and ever memorable act.

In addition to these considerations, we deem the following principles to be of great importance, however occasionally disparaged or obscure. That we are all imperfect and fallible, all needing the kind and charitable regards, which we are obligated also to extend to others; that

forbearance is mutually a duty, great and indispensable, especially in our ecclesiastical doings and relations; that without it, it is not to be expected that any ecclesiastical compact or organization, in this world, should be either durable or strong; that it is not every error that constitutes heresy, nor every species of vigilance and reprehension that deserves the meed of virtue; that some errors are the result of mental imbecility, of a faulty education, of a contracted vision, of an erring or infirm philosophy, of precipitation and incident merely, and even of the poverty of language, or the defects of phraseology. and the peculiarities of style; that it is quite probable the actual amount of error, in different parties, for which we all need repentance and forgiveness, is more nearly balanced, in the estimate of Omniscience, than any of our partialities might incline us selfishly to suppose; that the original materials, diverse sources, and wide-spread territories of our church, with the different sympathies, affinities, and interests thence engendered, are wonderful and peculiar, requiring the most sober, prudential, and enlarged consideration, in all those who reason, and who act, in reference to her catholic and confederated welfare; that for all minor errors, the avenues of public thought and hearing are open and accessible, and any opinion or dogma may be subjected to the animadversion and explosion of demonstrated truth; that every man ought to be grateful, not wrathy or vengeful, towards any brother, any man, or any enemy even, who should properly refute his errors; that to dread investigation or avoid evidence, is no part of the courage or the character of a Christian; and lastly, that the principles of our Form of Government and Book of Discipline, in reference to heresy, schism, and all allied evils, should be carefully, and conscientiously, and impartially, consulted and observed, especially the fifth chapter of the Book of Discipline, sections fifth, sixth, and seventh, and also the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth of the same, as the standard and the measure of all our action in the premises: all these, with prayer for the Divine guidance and the grace of the Holy Ghost imparted, that we may not injure what we design to improve; and that our beloved Zion may emerge, beautiful in the glory of her King, from the cloud that now invests her temple, and shine the hope of nations and the treasure of the world.

NO. IV.

Report of the Committee on Doctrine.

Whereas it is declared in the "Circular letter" of the late General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church "to all the churches of Jesus Christ," that "very serious" and "alarming" errors and disorders have long prevailed in the bounds of the exscinded synods

and other portions of the Church, and as the late Assembly appears to have been influenced in deciding on the case of these synods, by these alleged errors and disorders, therefore

1. *Resolved*, That while we bear in mind that with the excitement of extensive revivals indiscretions are sometimes intermingled—and that in the attempt to avoid a ruinous practical Antinomianism, human obligation is sometimes urged in a manner that favors Arminian errors—yet, we are bound to declare, that such errors and irregularities have never been sanctioned by these synods or presbyteries—that the prejudice has in a great degree arisen from censorious and exaggerated statements, and from the conduct of persons not in connexion with the Presbyterian Church—that all such departures from the sound doctrine or order of the Presbyterian Church we solemnly disapprove, and when known, deem it our duty to correct by every constitutional method.

2. *Resolved*, That, as the declaration of the religious sentiments of the synods and presbyteries whom we represent, we cordially embrace the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, "as containing the system of doctrine taught in the holy Scriptures," as understood by the Church ever since the Adopting Act of 1729; viz., "And in case any minister of the Synod, or any candidate for the ministry, shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of said confession, he shall in time of making said declaration, declare his scruples to the Synod or Presbytery; who shall, notwithstanding, admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our bounds, and to ministerial communion, if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge his scruples *not essential* or necessary in *Doctrine, Worship, or Government*.

3. *Resolved*, That in accordance with the above declaration, and also to meet the charges contained in the before-mentioned Circular and other published documents of the late General Assembly, this convention cordially disapprove and condemn the list of errors condemned by the late General Assembly, and adopt, as the expression of their own sentiments, and as they believe, the prevalent sentiments of the churches of these synods on the points in question, the list of "true doctrines" adopted by the minority of the said Assembly in their "Protest" on this subject, as follows, viz.:

ERRORS AND TRUE DOCTRINE.

"FIRST ERROR. 'That God would have prevented the existence of sin in our world, but was not able, without destroying the moral agency of man; or, that for aught that appears in the Bible to the contrary, sin is incidental to any wise moral system.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. God permitted the introduction of sin, not because he was unable to prevent it, consistently with the moral freedom of his creatures, but for wise and benevolent reasons which he has not revealed.

"SECOND ERROR. 'That election to eternal life is founded on a foresight of faith and obedience.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. Election to eternal life is not founded on a foresight of faith and obedience, but is a sovereign act of God's mercy, whereby, according to the counsel of his own will, he has chosen some to salvation; 'yet so as thereby neither is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established;' nor does this gracious purpose ever take effect independently of faith and a holy life.

"THIRD ERROR. 'That we have no more to do with the first sin of Adam than with the sins of any other parent.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. By a divine constitution, Adam was so the head and representative of the race, that, as a consequence of his transgression, all mankind become morally corrupt, and liable to death, temporal and eternal.

"FOURTH ERROR. 'That infants come into the world as free from moral defilement as was Adam when he was created.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. Adam was created in the image of God, endowed with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Infants come into the world, not only destitute of these, but with a nature inclined to evil and only evil.

"FIFTH ERROR. 'That infants sustain the same relation to the moral government of God, in this world, as brute animals, and that their sufferings and death are to be accounted for on the same principles as those of brutes, and not by any means to be considered as penal.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. Brute animals sustain no such relation to the moral government of God as does the human family. Infants are a part of the human family; and their sufferings and death are to be accounted for on the ground of their being involved in the general moral ruin of the race induced by the apostacy.

"SIXTH ERROR. 'That there is no other original sin than the fact, that all the posterity of Adam, though by nature innocent, will always begin to sin when they begin to exercise moral agency; that original sin does not include a sinful bias of the human mind, and a just exposure to penal suffering; and that there is no evidence in Scripture, that infants, in order to salvation, do need redemption by the blood of Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Ghost.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. Original sin is a natural bias to evil, resulting from the first apostacy, leading invariably and certainly to actual transgression. And all infants, as well as adults, in order to be saved, need redemption by the blood of Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Ghost.

"SEVENTH ERROR. 'That the doctrine of imputation, whether of the guilt of Adam's sin, or of the righteousness of Christ, has no foundation in the Word of God, and is both unjust and absurd.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. The sin of Adam is not imputed to his posterity in the sense of a literal transfer of personal qualities, acts, and demerit; but by reason of the sin of Adam, in his peculiar relation, the race are treated as if they had sinned. Nor is the righteousness of Christ imputed to his people in the sense of a literal transfer of personal qualities, acts, and merit; but by reason of his righteousness, in his peculiar relation, they are treated as if they were righteous.

"EIGHTH ERROR. 'That the sufferings and death of Christ were not truly vicarious and penal, but symbolical, governmental, and instructive only.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. The sufferings and death of Christ were not symbolical, governmental, and instructive only, but were truly vicarious, *i. e.*, a substitute for the punishment due to transgressors. And while Christ did not suffer the literal penalty of the law, involving remorse of conscience and the pains of hell, he did offer a sacrifice which, infinite wisdom saw to be a full equivalent. And by virtue of this atonement, overtures of mercy are sincerely made to the race, and salvation secured to all who believe.

"NINTH ERROR. 'That the impenitent sinner is by nature, and independently of the renewing influence or almighty energy of the Holy Spirit, in full possession of all the ability necessary to a full compliance with all the commands of God.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. While sinners have all the faculties necessary to a perfect moral agency and a just accountability, such is their love of sin and opposition to God and his law, that, independently of the renewing influence or almighty energy of the Holy Spirit, they never will comply with the commands of God.

"TENTH ERROR. 'That Christ does not intercede for the elect until after their regeneration.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. The intercession of Christ for the elect is previous as well as subsequent to their regeneration, as appears from the following Scripture, viz., 'I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.'

"ELEVENTH ERROR. 'That saving faith is not an effect of the operations of the Holy Spirit, but a mere rational belief of the truth or assent to the word of God.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. Saving faith is an intelligent and cordial assent to the testimony of God concerning his Son, implying reliance on Christ alone for pardon and eternal life; and in all cases it is an effect of the special operations of the Holy Spirit.

"TWELFTH ERROR. 'That regeneration is the act of the sinner himself, and that it consists in a change of his governing purpose, which he himself must produce, and which is the result, not of any direct influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart, but chiefly of a persuasive exhibition of the truth, analogous to the influence which one

man exerts over the mind of another; or that regeneration is not an instantaneous act, but a progressive work.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. Regeneration is a radical change of heart, produced by the special operations of the Holy Spirit, 'determining the sinner to that which is good,' and is in all cases instantaneous.

"THIRTEENTH ERROR. 'That God has done all that *he can do* for the salvation of all men, and that man himself must do the rest.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. While repentance for sin and faith in Christ are indispensable to salvation, all who are saved are indebted from first to last to the grace and Spirit of God. And the reason that God does not save all, is not that he wants the *power* to do it, but that in his wisdom he does not see fit to exert that power further than he actually does.

"FOURTEENTH ERROR. 'That God cannot exert such influence on the minds of men, as shall make it certain that they will choose and act in a particular manner, without impairing their moral agency.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. While the liberty of the will is not impaired, nor the established connexion betwixt means and end broken by any action of God on the mind, he can influence it according to his pleasure, and does effectually determine it to good in all cases of true conversion.

"FIFTEENTH ERROR. 'That the righteousness of Christ is not the sole ground of the sinner's acceptance with God; and that in no sense does the righteousness of Christ become ours.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. All believers are justified, not on the ground of personal merit, but solely on the ground of the obedience and death, or, in other words, the righteousness of Christ. And while that righteousness does not become theirs, in the sense of a literal transfer of personal qualities and merit; yet, from respect to it, God can and does treat them as if they were righteous.

"SIXTEENTH ERROR. 'That the reason why some differ from others in regard to their reception of the Gospel is, that they make themselves to differ.'

"TRUE DOCTRINE. While all such as reject the Gospel of Christ, do it, not by coercion but freely—and all who embrace it, do it, not by coercion but freely—the reason why some differ from others is, that *God* has made them to differ."

In further illustration of the doctrines prevalent in these sections of the Church, the Convention declare that the authors whose exposition and defence of the articles of our faith are most approved and used in these synods—are President Edwards, Witherspoon, and Dwight—Dr. Smalley, and Andrew Fuller—and the Commentators, Henry, Doddridge, and Scott.

NO. V.

REPORT of the Committee appointed to prepare a statement of facts relative to the formation and character of the churches within the bounds of the exscinded Synods.

The peculiar situation and character of the churches within these synods has been recently a topic of much interest and discussion, but is not in general correctly understood. The following statements in reference to their organization, it is believed, will set the matter in its true light, and exhibit both the real condition of the churches, and the grounds of their connexion with the General Assembly.

1. The Synod of the Western Reserve.

This synod was constituted by an act of the General Assembly, and embraced at the time of its formation three presbyteries taken from the Synod of Pittsburgh.

These presbyteries had adopted a constitution containing principles and provisions relative to the Congregational Churches under their care, which secured to them rights and privileges based on the plan of Union of 1801. These principles were fully understood, and the provisions sanctioned, by the Synod of Pittsburgh; and some of these churches were formed by members of this synod, who were also the missionaries of the General Assembly. The presbyteries, however, which have been formed by the Synod of the Western Reserve itself, have adopted no other constitution than that of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

The churches within the bounds of this synod, with a very few exceptions, are not properly of a mixed character, that is, in conducting their internal concerns, they are not presbyterian in relation to one portion of their members, and congregational in reference to another portion, but are either strictly presbyterian, governed by a regular bench of elders, or conduct their business by the male members of the church, or by a standing committee. In either case, discipline is conducted according to the rules of process in the Book of Discipline of the Presbyterian Church. The churches denominated congregational, differ from regular presbyterian churches in this respect, that they have not a permanent eldership. They are under the care of the Presbytery, regularly present their records for review, carry up their appeals, and submit to its decision. But by a voluntary stipulation on their part, they do not carry appeals onward to Synod, or General Assembly. The settlement of ministers over these churches, and the dissolution of the pastoral relation, uniformly take place with the consent and by the action of the Presbytery, as in other churches.

2. The Synods of Utica, Geneva, and Genesee.

The churches within the bounds of these synods do not stand on the same ground as those of the Western Reserve. Their connexion with the General Assembly has no reference to the plan of Union of 1801; and hence the abrogation of that plan could not in the slightest degree affect the standing of these churches, or destroy their relation to the General Assembly.

In the first place, a great majority of the churches in these synods are strictly presbyterian, being organized, and administering the government of the church, in accordance with the Book of Discipline, and have never forfeited their character or standing, by a departure from the standards of the Church, either in doctrine or discipline.

Secondly, The churches in connexion with these synods which are not strictly presbyterian, with perhaps one or two exceptions, do not, as has been generally supposed, rest on the plan of Union of 1801, but on a *special compact*, made between the Synod of Albany and the Middle Association of the State of New York, and ratified by the General Assembly in 1808. (See Digest, p. 310, and Appendix.) By this compact the Middle Association became a constituent part of the Synod of Albany, and the ministers and delegates of the churches belonging to the association were admitted into the synod with all the rights and privileges of ministers and elders of their presbyteries. At a subsequent period this association, and the Presbytery of Geneva, which covered, in part, the same territory, were formed by the Synod of Albany into the presbyteries of Geneva, Cayuga, and Onondaga—each embracing the ministers and churches within certain territorial limits. Other presbyteries were subsequently formed on the same principle, and churches were received on the same conditions and with the same rights and privileges. In a portion of these churches the business is, in most cases, transacted by the male members. The right of appeal, however, the review of records, and the supervision of the church by the Presbytery, is the same as in the case of churches fully presbyterian. The exact number of churches of this character within these synods, we are not at present able to state. The proportion to the whole number is believed to be less than one-third. Two or three large presbyteries have each but a single church, not strictly presbyterian, within its bounds—some have several—and in two or three presbyteries more than half the churches are of this class.

The ministers belonging to these synods are all presbyterian, and the business of the presbyteries and synods is conducted according to the form of government prescribed in the Book of Discipline. The presbyteries and synods, when convened, are composed of ministers and elders from the presbyterian churches, and delegates from the congregational churches, who are received as elders, and act in that capacity while members of the judicatory,

according to the provisions of the compact with the Synod of Albany above referred to.—And there is not a presbytery connected with either of the four synods above named, which has not several regularly constituted presbyterian churches.

The committee recommend that the document containing this compact, and the act of the Assembly by which it was ratified, be published in connexion with this report.

Albany Synod, in session at Cooperstown, Oct. 7, 1807.

"The Rev. Mr. Samuel Fuller, of the Northern Associated Presbytery, and the Rev. Mr. Joshua Leonard, from 'the Middle Association in the Western District,' produced testimonials of their appointment as commissioners from their respective bodies, for the purpose of forming some union with this Synod. These commissioners, being requested, stated the views and wishes of their respective bodies.

"The subject being in some measure discussed, was deferred till to-morrow morning for further consideration.

"*Wednesday morning, 9 o'clock.*—The Synod resumed the consideration of forming some plan of union and correspondence with the Northern Associated Presbytery and the Middle Association in the Western District. After mature deliberation, they concluded it to be an object of great importance to the peace, prosperity and happiness of the congregations under their care, locally situated as they are together, as well as to the advancement of the interests of religion generally, that some plan of union and correspondence should exist between them. Therefore,

"*Resolved*, That the Rev. Messrs. Coe, Oliver, and Woodruff be a committee to prepare a draft of a letter to these ecclesiastical judicatories, stating the readiness of the Synod, with the approbation of the General Assembly, to form as intimate a connexion with them as the constitution of our church will admit, and inviting them to become constituent branches of the Synod, and assuring them of our cheerfulness in leaving their churches undisturbed in the administration of their own government, until they shall become better acquainted with ours, and shall voluntarily adopt it.

"*Friday morning, 9 o'clock.*—The Rev. J. Coe, from the committee to prepare the draft of a letter to the Northern Associated Presbytery and to the Middle Association in the Western District, in answer to their application about a union with this Synod, brought in such a draft, which was read, corrected, and approved, and is as follows:—

COOPERSTOWN, Oct. 9, 1807.

Dear Brethren,—We received your communication by the Rev. [Mr. Leonard] with great pleasure, and were highly gratified with

the object of his mission, which has occupied our serious attention. Situated as our judicatories are in a new country, rapidly increasing in its population; blended as our people are in the same settlements, and holding the same divine doctrines, it is certainly an object of interesting importance that we should be cemented together in some intimate bond of union and correspondence. Such an union would make us better acquainted, and increase our attachment to one another as servants of our common Lord. It would facilitate the establishment of the gospel in many of the destitute settlements of our country, by uniting our people in a common cause; and it would enable us to combine our exertions more effectually in suppressing error, licentiousness and vice, and promoting the great interests of pure morality and undefiled religion. Prompted by these considerations, and animated with a desire to do all in our power to advance the general interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, the Synod of Albany stand ready, with the approbation of the General Assembly, to form as intimate a connexion with your [Association] Presbytery as the constitution of our church will admit.

We most cordially invite you to become a constituent branch of our body, by [assuming the characteristic and scriptural name of Presbytery, and] adopting our standard of doctrine and government, and sit and vote with us in all the great and interesting concerns of the church. [Deeming the name, however, far less important than the thing, although of consequence to uniformity in the same body, yet, should you be solicitous to retain yours, it will not be considered on our part a bar to so desirable a union.]

Nor do we confine our invitation to you as ministers; but we also extend it to delegates from your churches, whom we are willing to receive as substantially the same with our ruling elders, to assist us in our public deliberations and decisions. Knowing the influence of education and habit, should the churches under your care prefer transacting their internal concerns in their present mode of Congregational government, we assure them of our cheerfulness in leaving them undisturbed in the administration of that government, unless they shall choose to alter it themselves.

Should you accede to this plan of union and correspondence, and our General Assembly permit us to form it, which we are disposed to think they readily will, we anticipate the auspicious period as just at hand, when all the congregations of Presbyterian churches in this northern region will form one great phalanx against the common enemy, and combine their exertions to advance the mediatorial kingdom of our exalted Lord.

We are, Reverend Brethren, with sentiments of respect and esteem,

Yours sincerely.

By order of Synod.

SAMUEL F. SNOWDEN, Moderator.

"In the above draft, the parts between brackets apply only to the Association, and are to be omitted in the copy to the Presbytery.

"Ordered, that a copy of the preceding letter, according to the directions above mentioned, be transmitted by the Moderator to the bodies respectively for whom it was designed."

Session at Aurora, October 5th, 1808.

"Whereas, it appeared that the plan of union and correspondence, proposed by the Synod at their last meeting, between them and the Middle Association on the Military Tract and its vicinity, has been transmitted to said Association; and whereas the said Association have acceded to said plan of union and correspondence, as appears from the records of said Association, adduced by the Rev. Hugh Wallace and Deacon Peter Hitchcock, who are deputed to act on this subject; and whereas the General Assembly have permitted the Synod to form this plan of union and correspondence; therefore,

"*Resolved,* That the Middle Association on the Military Tract and its vicinity, be received as a constituent branch of the Synod, and they are hereby received accordingly—retaining their own name and usages in the administration of the government of their churches according to the terms stated in the plan.

"Ordered, that the Clerk furnish the Association with an attested copy of the above minute."

"The Rev. Joshua Leonard, Hugh Wallace, Nathan B. Derrow, Francis Pomeroy, and Reuben Hurd; and Messrs. Gilbert Weed, Peter Hitchcock, and Samuel Seward, delegates, members of said Association, being present, took their seats in Synod."

"A true copy from the minutes of the Synod of Albany,

Attest, REUBEN SMITH, Stated Clerk.

Waterford, April 2, 1835."

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§ 2. *The plan of union and correspondence with the Synod of Albany approved, in* 1808.

"The Synod of Albany requested the Assembly to sanction a plan of union and correspondence between themselves and the Northern Associate Presbytery, and the Middle Association in the Western District in the State of New-York; which plan is contained in pages 117–121 of the Synodical Minutes. The plan being read, and the subject discussed, *Resolved,* That the Assembly sanction the aforesaid plan.—Vol. II. p. 258."